

Short-Term Effects of Alcohol Use

When a person drinks alcohol, it follows the same pathway as food through the digestive system. However, unlike food, alcohol does not have to be digested by the stomach in order to be absorbed into the blood. Once alcohol reaches the blood, it is circulated throughout the body within minutes, and affects every part including, the brain and the central nervous system.

Effects on Body Systems

When people DRINK alcohol FASTER than the body can BREAK it down into the harmless COMPOUNDS of CARBON dioxide and WATER, they become INTOXICATED.

Intoxication means a person's MENTAL and PHYSICAL abilities have been IMPAIRED by alcohol.

The SHORT-term EFFECTS that alcohol will have on an INDIVIDUAL depends on several different FACTORS such as, how much a person WEIGHS, their AGE, as well as their SEX. Those FACTORS will also vary DEPENDING on how much alcohol the person DRINKS, what TYPE of alcohol they drink, whether they MIX alcohols, and if they have any MEDICINES in their system. Some of the SHORT-term EFFECTS of alcohol include:

- Impaired JUDGEMENT: Because alcohol is a DEPRESSANT it RELAXES people often after one or two DRINKS. People tend to LOOSE their INHIBITIONS when they drink and unfortunately they often DO or SAY things they normally wouldn't.
- INABILITY to make RESPONSIBLE decisions: When teens drink they LOOSE the ability to make GOOD decisions. Often times the INABILITY to make REASONABLE decisions can RESULT in getting someone in very DANGEROUS situations such as DRINKING and driving.

- Loss of COORDINATION: When a person DRINKS more alcohol than the body can DETOXIFY or break down, this will begin to IMPAIR their COORDINATION making them STUMBLE while walking, fall DOWN, slur their SPEECH and even result in BLURRED vision.
- EMOTIONAL behavior: There are many PEOPLE who say that someone's true FEELINGS come out when they DRINK. This is because ALCOHOL is a DEPRESSANT and as a person becomes DRUNK and loose their INHIBITIONS, they become BOLDER in their ACTIONS, and their current EMOTIONAL state is heightened. People who DRINK can become IRRITABLE, excitable, HAPPY, angry, MEAN, weepy, and even AGGRESSIVE.
- BLACK outs: A person drinking a LOT of alcohol can suffer a blackout. A BLACKOUT is a PERIOD of TIME that the DRINKER simply cannot REMEMBER. After the drinking EPISODE, the following day the DRINKER may have no MEMORY of what happened the DAY before. The DRINKER may HARM others or be HARMED themselves during the blackout.

Short-Term Effects of Alcohol

Physical and mental IMPAIRMENT begins with the FIRST drink of alcohol and INCREASES as more alcohol is CONSUMED. Alcohol BEGINS acting on the body as SOON as it is SWALLOWED. Alcohol does not have to be digested. About 20 percent of the alcohol CONSUMED is ABSORBED directly across the WALLS of an empty STOMACH and can reach the BRAIN within ONE minute. From the STOMACH and INTESTINES, alcohol moves RAPIDLY into the BLOODSTREAM. Once in the BLOOD, alcohol will ENTER every CELL. Within MINUTES of drinking, ETHANOL will AFFECT the BRAIN, nerves, MUSCLES and small BLOOD vessels in the skin.

How Alcohol Affects the Individual

One of the greatest RISKS of alcohol is that there is no way to PREDICT how a person will REACT when alcohol ENTERS his/her BODY. Some FACTORS that INFLUENCE how a person is affected may include:

- Body SIZE: A SMALLER person will FEEL the effects of the SAME amount of alcohol FASTER than a HEAVIER person will. Heavier people have more BLOOD and WATER in their body to “thin out” the EFFECTS of alcohol.
- SEX: Alcohol generally will move FASTER into the BLOODSTREAM of FEMALES because females tend to be SMALLER in SIZE than males.
- FOOD: A person who has EATEN recently has FOOD in the STOMACH. This will SLOW the PASSING of ALCOHOL into the bloodstream.
- Speed of DRINKING: Drinking A LOT in a SHORT period of time will CAUSE the alcohol to STAY in the bloodstream longer. If a person DRINKS alcohol FASTER than the LIVER can BREAK it down, the person will become INTOXICATED.
- AMOUNT Consumed: The AMOUNT a person DRINKS plays an IMPORTANT part in how his/her body REACTS. As the amount of alcohol INCREASES, the level of ALCOHOL in the bloodstream RAISES.
- SYNERGY: Some drugs can INTERACT with each other to produce EFFECTS that are many times GREATER than either DRUG would have produced itself. When DRUGS taken together, INCREASE each other’s EFFECTS, the interaction is called SYNERGY.

Resisting Peer Pressure

Resisting PEER pressure is very DIFFICULT particularly
when you are being PRESSURED by your FRIENDS
or other people you like or ADMIRE. You need to be
prepared to REFUSE the URGING of others.
Remember, REFUSING to drink is a very PERSONAL
decision that requires no APOLOGY or EXPLANATION
on your part.